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## Book Reviews

*Three Tragedies of Seneca.* By HUGH MACMASTER KINGERY. New York: Macmillan, 1908. Pp. 310.

The tragedies of Seneca deserve some place, even though it be not a great one, in the classical curricula of both the college and the university. If the number of electives is limited, as is necessarily the case in some of our smaller colleges, the plan of making Junior and Senior Latin each consist of alternating courses enables the student who desires to specialize to become fairly familiar with almost all of the important Latin authors. In such courses, Seneca, one of the representative writers of the Silver Age both as philosopher and as dramatist, should take his proper place beside the two Plinies, Juvenal, Quintilian, and Tacitus. His plays are especially worthy of study because they are the only complete Latin tragedies extant today; even though they were intended primarily for recitation, they are not vastly different from the earlier acted Latin tragedy of Ennius and Naevius.

Professor Kingery's edition of the *Hercules Furens*, the *Troades*, and the *Medea* is a textbook exactly suited to the needs of an undergraduate who wishes to read only a small amount of Seneca. The book opens with an introduction which effectively prepares the reader for the author whom he is about to study. This introduction is made up of a number of short essays on such themes as "Tragic Literature at Rome," "The Senecan Tragedies," "Greek Models," "Stage Setting," "The Question of Authorship," "Seneca's Life," written in an attractive, unpretentious style. There follow two or three pages on versification which make the usually puzzling problem of meter comparatively simple; unfortunately there are here some unnecessary repetitions. A brief notice of the manuscripts and editions comes after these remarks on prosody; a more logical arrangement would have placed them after the section on "Seneca's Works."

The text, based for the most part on that of Leo (Berlin, 1879), is conveniently provided with accents. Perhaps if stage directions had been inserted at the beginning of each scene, and elsewhere as occasion demanded, the dramatic nature of the works might have been more vividly thrust upon the attention of the unimaginative student. Very wisely, little space is devoted to textual difficulties. The notes are judiciously written and are kept within seemly bounds. Although the mythological explanations are given with considerable fullness, every now and then the editor insinuatingly admonishes the reader to consult the classical dictionaries. References and quotations should be sparingly used in making notes for a school or college textbook; Professor Kingery, however, certainly is justified in pointing out the relation of Seneca's plays to their Greek originals, and in showing how they abound in reminiscences of Ovid, Horace, and Virgil. Occasionally

an original illustration strikes the attention, as that in the note to *Hercules Furens* 841, where the Roman method of reckoning both the beginning and end in counting is compared to our designation of the musical intervals, as "thirds," "fifths," and "octaves;" or again in the note on *Troades* 79, where the injunction of the chorus to Hecuba:

*ite ad planctus, miseramque leva,  
regina, manum,*

is compared to the handling of the baton by the conductor of a modern orchestra.

Finally, the brief words of criticism and appreciation scattered throughout the commentary seem to me one of its most admirable features. Such little phrases as "This whole passage, depicting the hero's awakening from his trance, is admirably done," "The last three lines of the scene, with their smooth movement and abounding liquids, echo the change of spirit from the fierce wrath of the hero to the peace that followed his departure," "A fine expression of the responsibility that goes with power," "Intensely sarcastic," "A fine bit of special pleading, in which Helen makes out that her own lot is hardest of all and that she herself is wholly innocent," are just what the average student needs to make him sit up and take notice, *ut ita dicam*. Too often he, and sometimes, alack, his teacher also, overlooks the possibility that literary beauty and power may lie hidden in the pages of even our minor Latin authors.

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*The Rule of Three Actors in the Classical Greek Drama.* By KELLEY REES. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1908. University of Chicago Dissertation. Pp. 86. \$0.79.

In this dissertation Dr. Rees boldly challenges the current interpretation of the three-actor law in its application to classical Greek drama. This law, based largely on Aristotle *Poet.* iv. 1449a, 11-14, and the lexicographers, has commonly been taken to mean that three speaking actors, by the doubling of rôles, were sufficient for the performance of a play. This interpretation Rees believes to be the result of a misconception: the law is in reality an aesthetic canon formulated by Aristotle with reference to the artistic form of the drama, not to the economy of its production. Its real meaning, for the classical period, is that not more than three speaking actors should appear on the scene at the same time.

After (I) the Introduction, dealing with the formulation of the rule by modern scholars, its development, and the scope of its application, (II) the evidence for the so-called law is treated in detail. Next (III) the distinction is drawn between the aesthetic canon of Aristotle and the economic conditions determining the number of actors employed in a play. The fourth chapter (IV) urges six valid objections to the law as usually applied, but (V) there may have been a practical three-actor rule in the period of the guilds. Finally (VI), a redistribution of rôles is suggested in selected plays.